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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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73



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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue

In **Katie King** we consider the accusation that the eminent scientist William Crookes was a liar and a cheat. In **Standing stones** we look at the approach to research into the ancient megaliths known as astro-archaeology, which may contribute new, important perspectives in solving the riddles posed by the stones. In **UFO Casebook** a former French gendarme is approached by a UFO, while in another case an Australian housewife has her car buzzed by a large glowing object. We relate more prophecies that came true – right up to the present century – in the **Brahman seer**. Eastern thought has always held that objectivity is an illusion – an idea that is now beginning to shake the foundations of science, for evidence of an **Experimenter effect** suggests that a scientist's belief will affect his results. We investigate this intriguing form of mind over matter.

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Mystery of the standing stones

The standing stones of Europe have been studied for centuries. Less well-known are the networks of megaliths in Africa, America and the Far East. PAUL DEVEREUX describes some of these mysterious and remote sites

AMONG THE MOST ENDURING and enigmatic of the relics left by ancient peoples are the megalithic monuments. The world-wide distribution of standing stones makes it clear that they were built by many different peoples at many, widely different, times. There are the famous stone circles – among them Stonehenge – of Britain, the alignments of menhirs at Carnac in Brittany, France, the stone rings of northern Africa, and the standing stones, long unrecognised as such, of North America. But in addition to these, megaliths are found in more unlikely places. There are the carved stones, *nagakallu*, of India; rings of stone phalluses in Mexico; dolmens near the borders of Tibet; a stone circle by the Yangtze river in China; almost forgotten megaliths in Japan, and so on.

The confusing variety of terminology reflects the diversity of the stones. A megalith – from the Greek *mega*, big, and *lithos*, stone – means any massive stone, and generally refers to a standing stone of the Neolithic period. Menhir is the Breton word for standing stone, while a dolmen – another Breton word – is a prehistoric stone table consisting of standing stones balancing a megalith on top, forming a kind of primitive chamber

The Devil's Arrows (below) in Yorkshire are the tallest standing stones in Britain, rising to a maximum height of 22½ feet (6.8 metres). The Stall Moor row (inset) on Dartmoor is the longest row of megaliths, stretching over 2 miles (3 kilometres)



open to the weather.

Many of the world's standing stones relate to burial rituals; human remains have been found, in particular, in dolmens. Some of Britain's stone circles proved to have astronomical significance. In many cases temples of the new religion of a country – for instance, Christian churches throughout Europe – were built close to megalithic sites, which testifies to the fact that the old sites were regarded as in some way sacred. It seems foolish to seek a common explanation for all the standing stones of the world *en masse*; all that it is possible to say at this stage is that they relate to certain common human responses to the natural environment. To enquire further, it is best to turn to the relatively well-researched stones of Britain and north-west Europe.

In Britain, single standing stones were erected by several cultures from the Neolithic period (about 4000 BC to 2000 BC) right through to the medieval period. What are believed to be the oldest monoliths are the most mysterious and impressive. One of these, the tallest monolith in Britain, is the 25-foot (8-metre) Neolithic stone pillar in the churchyard at Rudston, Humberside. A church was built alongside the monolith, perhaps indicating that the local people recognised that it marked a sacred site: at any rate, the great stone is known as 'the grandmother of the church'.

More spectacular than single monoliths in



Standing stones

engineering terms, however, are the groupings and alignments of standing stones – for instance, the group of three menhirs known as the Devil's Arrows, near Boroughbridge in Yorkshire. This Neolithic group is not linear, as is sometimes claimed, and probably originally included one or two more stones that made up an irregular saw-tooth pattern. The remaining monoliths range from 18 feet to over 22 feet (6 to over 7 metres) in height. The nearest source of the millstone grit of which they are composed is about 7 miles (11 kilometres) away near Knaresborough: their transportation and placing must therefore have cost the megalith builders a great deal in time and effort, indicating that the significance – whatever it was – was of the highest order.

Megaliths of the West

The greatest concentration of megaliths in England is in Cornwall, where circles, dolmens and menhirs abound. Many of the stones in this part of the world probably date from the earliest period of the so-called Bronze Age (which lasted very approximately from 1800 BC to 900 BC).

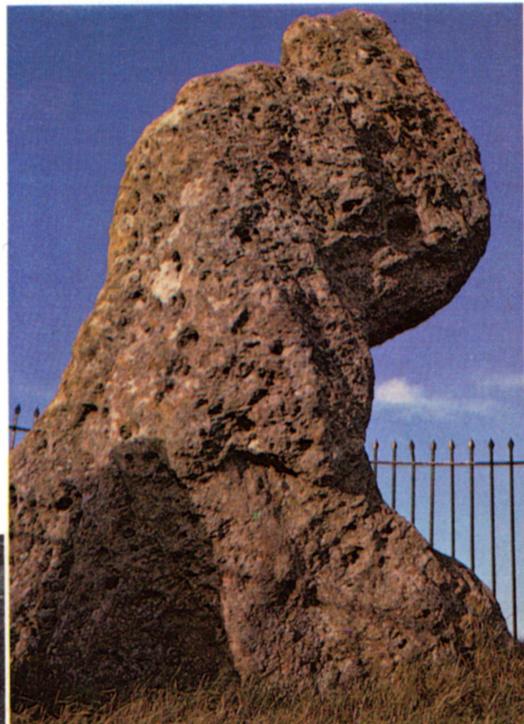
Dartmoor, in neighbouring Devon, is a prime area for a wide range of megalithic monuments too. Its speciality is its stone rows. Like the Cornish stones, these are thought to date from the early Bronze Age; they are formed by fairly small standing stones – usually set in a saw-tooth fashion rather than in straight lines – and can occur in multiple parallel lines as well as single alignments. The longest existing row is on Stall Moor near Ivybridge on southern Dartmoor and runs from a small stone circle to a cairn on Green Hill – a distance of $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles (4 kilometres).

There are nearly 900 known stone rings in the United Kingdom. Study by Professor

Alexander Thom has shown that they range in plan from true circles to various forms of ellipses, egg-shapes and flattened circles. One truly circular ring is that known as the King's Men or the Rollright Stones, near Little Rollright, 20 miles (30 kilometres) north-west of Oxford. It is about 100 feet (30 metres) in diameter, and there is a legend that its stones are uncountable – it is a fact that every survey of the site has recorded a different number of stones! A few hundred yards from the circle is a tall monolith known as the Kingstone; there is a legend that the Kingstone, together with the Whispering Knights dolmen that stands, minus its cap-stone, a quarter of a mile (400 metres) from the circle, go to a nearby stream at night to drink.

Not far to the south-west of the Rollright Stones is the Cotswold region, which is noted for its Neolithic chambered mounds. Although these seem at first glance to be earthen structures, they are in fact based on quite sophisticated stone skeletons providing

Below: the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire, also known as the King's Men; nearby stands a dolmen called the Whispering Knights (right). Legend has it that some of the stones go to a nearby stream to drink at night; similar legends are attached to many standing stones throughout the world, and may, some experts believe, be an imperfect memory of some aspect of the religious belief that inspired the megalith builders



stone-lined passages that end in one or more chambers. There are, in all, about 600 surviving examples in the United Kingdom, of which perhaps the most exciting is Bryn Celli Ddu on Anglesey, where the central chamber contains a 6-foot (2-metre) monolith.

Most people's mental image of megaliths stems from those found at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, the most famous megalithic site in Britain. Britain has many henges – Neolithic earthen circles – but comparatively few of them are marked by standing stones. The smallest stones at Stonehenge are the bluestones, which seem to have been brought from South Wales and added to the henge structure at an early date. Later on, the larger and more familiar sarsen uprights and lintels were erected. Nowhere else in Britain are there prehistoric megalithic structures with lintels like these. (See page 827.)

The richness of the heritage of standing stones in the United Kingdom has meant that the greatest developments in archaeological and related research on this subject have occurred in this country. This has ensured that the remains have been well-documented – if not always well-understood. These two factors, combined, have tended to make the literature on the subject somewhat biased – sometimes giving the impression that megaliths are few and far between beyond the British mainland. But this is not the case.

Even as near as Ireland, the relative lack of



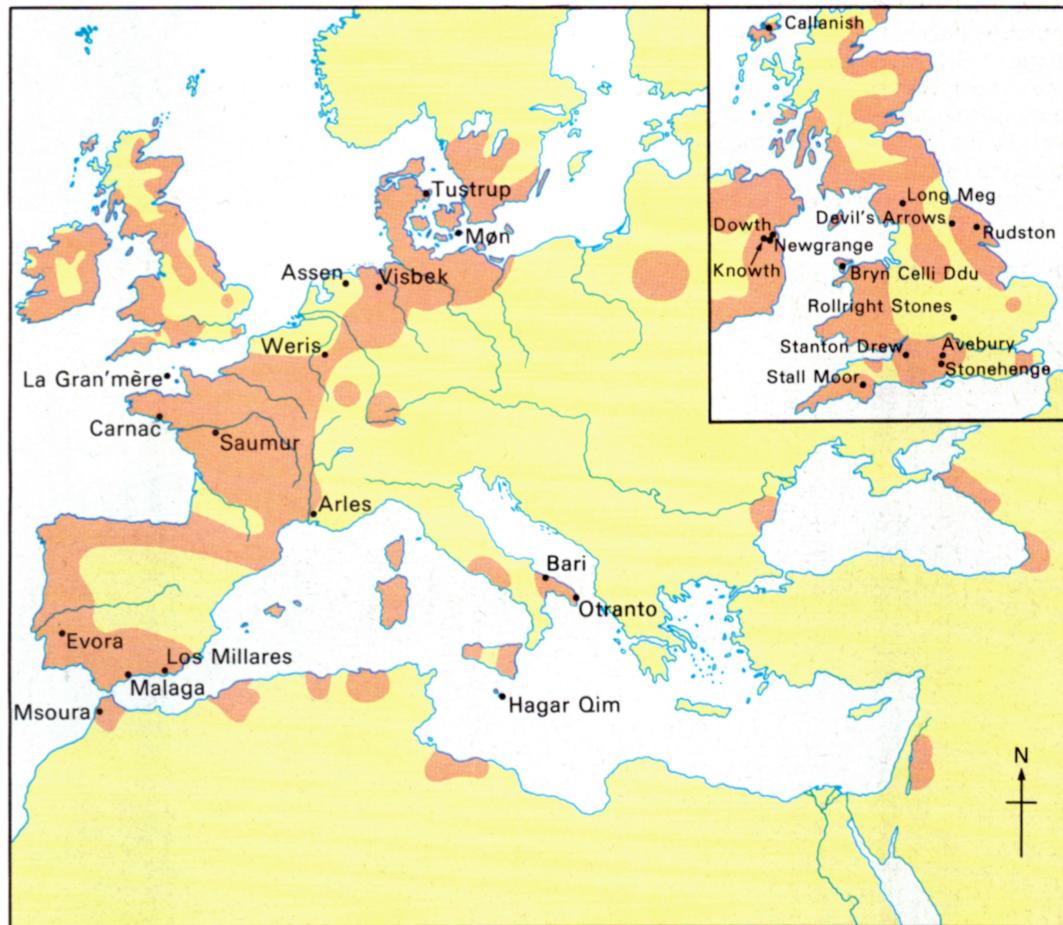
A monolith outside the chambered mound of Bryn Celli Ddu on the Island of Anglesey, Wales. Although they may seem to be only man-made hills, Britain's Neolithic mounds are often in fact constructed around complex structures of stone

reported research becomes noticeable. Yet Ireland has a richer store of megaliths than the United Kingdom, and many of them seem to be even more ancient.

There are over 1000 megalithic barrows in Ireland, the best-known being those in the Boyne valley, about 30 miles (50 kilometres) north of Dublin, where the immense mounds of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth dominate the landscape. Newgrange is faced in quartz and surrounded by a huge circle comprised of massive standing stones. The mound's entrance is straddled by a horizontal pillar carved with a central groove flanked by multiple spirals. The entrance leads into a passage going over 60 feet (20 metres) into the heart of the mound, terminating in a magnificent stone chamber. The origins of this marvellous structure are currently dated at around the middle of the fourth millennium BC. Knowth and Dowth may be even older.

Moving south from the British Isles, there are exceptional megalithic remains to be discovered on the Channel Islands, which contain many relics of the Neolithic and Bronze ages, including a very special form of monolith – the statue menhir. These curious late Neolithic monuments are slabs or pillars on which are carved the schematic features of a human being. In Guernsey, for example, is La Gran'mère ('the Granny'), situated in the churchyard at Câtel. This is a block of local granite over 6 feet (2 metres) high, carved to

Right: this map shows the distribution of the standing stones of Europe and northern Africa. The major megaliths are identified by name; the main areas are shaded



Standing stones

represent a female head and torso; two close-set protrusions in the middle of one side of the stone depict the breasts. This type of menhir is also to be found in France, Italy and Corsica.

France is extremely rich in megalithic remains; some of the oldest in Europe are to be found here. The best-known French prehistoric features are undoubtedly the megaliths around Carnac, in Morbihan, Brittany. This area is a megalithic Disney-land. Nearly 3000 menhirs form groups of parallel lines running in different directions. The whole region is peppered with other sites too: stones forming circles, squares and rectangles, and massive monoliths.

Spain and Portugal, like France, have many megalithic sites, mainly in the form of chambered mounds, some with monoliths within them. There are prehistoric monuments on many of the Mediterranean islands, sophisticated temple-like structures such as Hagar Qim on Malta being perhaps the best-known. The Maltese structures, interestingly, display uprights and lintels a little reminiscent of Stonehenge.

Archaeologically speaking, Africa remains a dark continent. It is widely accepted that in this vast land the fossil remains of the earliest human beings have been found. The mighty megalithic city of Zimbabwe is also well-known. What is less widely appreciated is that scattered throughout Africa are pockets of standing stone monuments: the north coast of the continent, for instance, contains a number of sites. One, the stone circle of Msoura in Morocco, 180 feet (60 metres) in diameter, is comparable to any of the great circles of Europe. Down the west African coast, the Senegambian region between the Saloum and Gambia rivers has many megaliths. In this 15,000 square-mile



Above: the four sections of the Grand Menhir Brisé – the 'great broken menhir' – at Locmariaquer near Carnac in Brittany, France. This extraordinary monument once stood about 70 feet (21 metres) tall, and weighed around 340 tonnes. The stone of which it is made was quarried 50 miles (80 kilometres) away

Below: Mont de la Ville – 'mountain of the town' – megaliths that were transported from their original setting in Jersey to Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, in the 18th century

(39,000 square-kilometre) area, some 800 stone circles have been recorded – almost as many as in the United Kingdom. In addition, there are nearly 2000 menhirs. The stones are of local ironstone, up to 8 feet (2.5 metres) in height, and tend to be round or D-shaped in section, although there are a few octagonal ones.

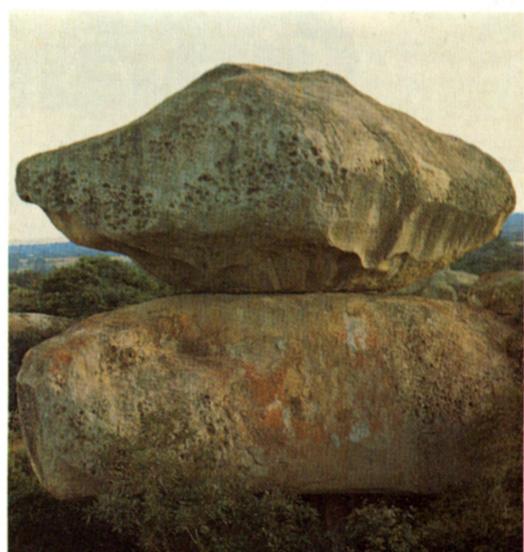
There are standing stones on the other side of the continent as well, in Kenya; most of them take the form of circles and alignments. One group of sites is near Lake Turkana, where the stones have geometric and animal carvings on them. One site contains two rows of 12 crude stone pillars, one oriented north-south, the other east-west.

Across Africa's vastness there must be many standing stones waiting to be discovered. Some authorities feel that it may have been from Africa that the megalith builders came, moving north through the



Iberian peninsula, eventually reaching the British Isles. There are almost as many theories as scholars; other suggested origins are India, the Middle East, the Russian Steppes – or even Atlantis. But it is significant that, as long ago as the 12th century, Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his *History of the kings of Britain*, recorded the tradition that the great stones of what he called the Giant's Ring – probably Stonehenge – were originally brought to Ireland 'from the remotest confines of Africa' by a race of giants. Geoffrey claims that Merlin later transferred the stones to England 'by skill' – magic. It is intriguing to note that a legend associated with the Senegambian stones also claims that they were erected by giants. There seems to be some dimly remembered, fragmented folk-memory in all of this. Further research into the African stones may reveal some

The 'balancing rocks' (right), part of a group of megaliths just outside Salisbury, Zimbabwe, and the megaliths of Msoura, Morocco (below). Spectacular standing stones are constantly being discovered throughout Africa. Perhaps, after all, there is some truth to the old story that Stonehenge was brought to England by a race of giants 'from the remotest confines of Africa'. Most experts, at least, believe that the megalith builders migrated northwards and eastwards through Spain to the rest of Europe



traceable connections with their European counterparts.

If Africa's stones still sleep, the United States is just awakening to the ancient mysteries in its own landscape. The most astonishing sites are earthen – mounds of geometric, animal and human shapes (see page 421) – but there are also stone features that are exciting some researchers.

In the wooded countryside of New England are dozens of mounds covering megalithic stone chambers. Some of these, like the so-called 'Calendar 2' site near South Woodstock, Vermont, appear to have striking astronomical orientations and strange ground-plans. Nevertheless, critics claim these features are merely colonial cellars, built in stone to protect the contents from marauding animals. But if so, someone at Calendar 2 thought it worthwhile to heave 13-foot (4-metre) megaliths around to form a roof to protect his turnips!

In New Hampshire there is a site that has to be genuinely ancient – or else a deliberate hoax. Known as Mystery Hill, it is a 13-acre

Below: a standing stone in South Woodstock, Vermont. The megaliths appear to be arranged in complex astronomical alignments



(1.2-hectare) hilltop site containing an array of megalithic chambers, dolmens and monoliths, as well as a curious horizontal slab with grooves that has come to be called the 'sacrificial altar'. Apparent alignments radiating out from the centre of this complex to surrounding standing stones give significant astronomical orientations. Astonishingly, the British archaeologist Professor Glyn Daniel has dismissed the whole site as an 'unimportant eccentricity'. Fairly recent radio-carbon dating indicates that the site may be around 4000 years old.

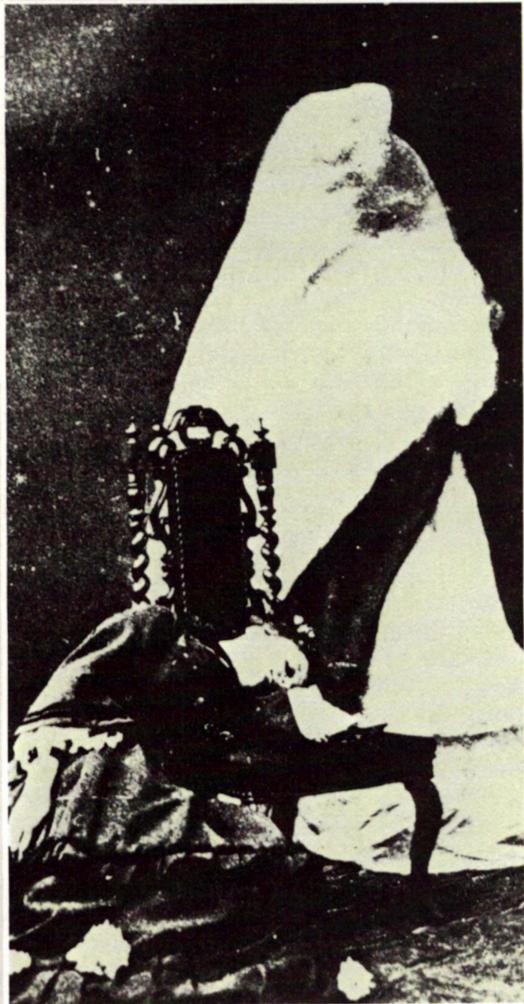
While controversy rages over the New England stones, a remarkable discovery seems to have been made far to the southwest, in Arizona. Researchers claim to have discovered a 130-foot (40-metre) diameter stone circle a few years ago at a location (kept secret for fear of vandalism) that they called Zodiac Ridge. Their research has apparently shown that the stone ring could accurately measure certain solar and lunar events, and the folklore of a local Indian tribe tells of 'star priests' who used the site for astronomical purposes. If these early reports are true, this is the best linking of lore with the use of a specific site for a recorded purpose so far discovered anywhere in the world.

America has many other ancient and fascinating structures, such as the rings of relatively small stones called 'medicine wheels' in the Rockies (one of which, at least, displays similar geometry to a British stone circle – Barbrook II, in Leicestershire), and the slabs apparently erected by the Anasazi Indians in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. To suggest that there were unsuspected megalithic cultures in America, let alone the fascinating possibility of prehistoric contact between the Old and New Worlds – is unthinkable to orthodox scholars. But as megalith research continues, these are ideas that will have to be taken seriously.

Why did ancient peoples erect standing stones?
See page 1470

Guaranteed genuine?

When the eminent Victorian scientist William Crookes began investigating the pretty teenage medium Florence Cook – and her manifestation ‘Katie King’ – the gossips had a field day. ROY STEMMAN discusses Crookes’s role



Left: one of the 44 photographs Crookes took of Florrie and Katie together. Unfortunately the drapery that is apparently blowing across Katie's face does little to dispel the critics' charge that, depending on the situation, Katie and Florrie were either one and the same person or that Katie was, in fact, Florrie's sister Kate. Sadly, many of the negatives were destroyed by Crookes shortly before his death in 1919, but of those that remain there is not one that indisputably shows that Katie and Florrie were separate people

Below: Mornington Road in north-west London, where Crookes investigated the mediumship of Florrie Cook in 1874. The road was bombed in the Second World War

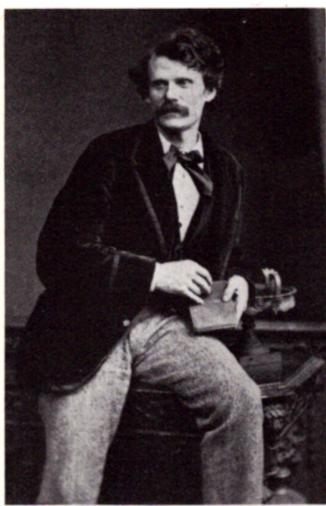
THE CURTAINS that hung across the corner of a dimly lit basement in east London parted and a figure in white stepped out. Katie King, the good-looking daughter of a pirate, had left the spirit world once again in order to materialise on earth in the late 19th century.

The witnesses could see her bare hands and arms as well as her attractive face: the rest of her was enveloped in white robes. For two hours she walked about the room, talking familiarly with those present.

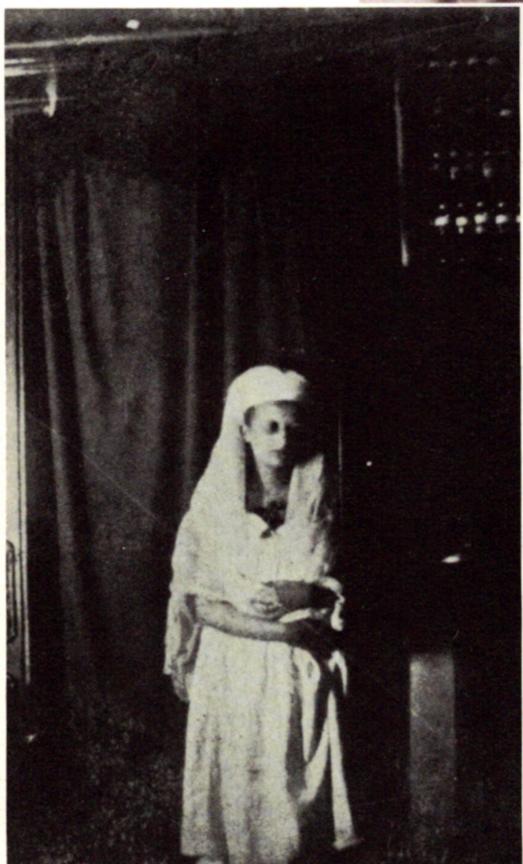
On several occasions she put her arm through the arm of a gentleman guest and they walked together around the room. The man in question was William (later Sir William) Crookes, one of the greatest physicists of the 19th century, and he testified that, as they walked arm-in-arm, ‘the impression was conveyed to my mind that it was a living woman by my side, instead of a visitor from the other world. . . .’

That, sceptics say, was hardly surprising since Katie King *was* a living woman – Florence Cook, the young medium in whose presence the ‘spirit’ appeared. Florrie, after all, would sit behind the curtain before the seance began, then Katie would emerge and perform some minutes after the lights were put out, and would return to the screened-off cabinet at the end of the session. After a suitable wait the lights would be turned on,





Being a medium in Victorian days almost guaranteed that one was the centre of attention – not all of it uncritical. Among the many American mediums who were lionised in Europe were Henry Slade (right) and the celebrated D. D. Home (above). Home was investigated by William Crookes and his phenomena were found to be genuine – shortly before Crookes began his more famous investigation into the mediumship of Florrie Cook



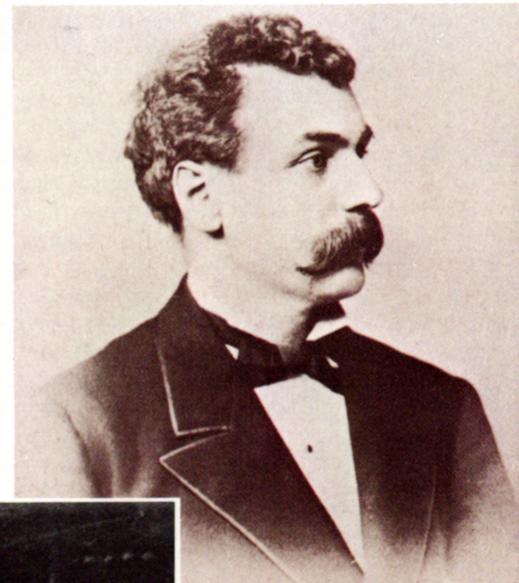
Left: the materialised Katie King stands in front of the curtained-off recess that served as the traditional medium's cabinet in Crookes's house in Mornington Road. The dark material at her bosom might be taken by some sceptics to be a glimpse of Florrie's customary black dress under the voluminous 'spirit robes'

the curtains opened and Florrie would be found, dressed in black and usually tied up in just the way she had been at the start of the session.

Non-believers saw it as an open-and-shut case of a clever medium masquerading as a spirit. Florrie and Katie even looked alike – suspiciously so. But science, in the impressive form of William Crookes, came to the rescue.

Crookes's first experience of psychic phenomena occurred in July 1869 and a year later, after the controversial American medium Henry Slade visited London, the famous scientist announced that he would conduct a thorough investigation of Spiritualist phenomena.

He began by studying one of the most



famous mediums of all time, Daniel Dunglas Home (see page 330), and was soon convinced that Home was endowed with a powerful psychic force. Many believed that Crookes would expose the phenomena he witnessed. But this rapid conversion to the ranks of believers surprised the public and shocked his scientific colleagues.

They were in for an even bigger shock when they learned, in 1874, that Crookes was on friendly terms with a pretty young female spirit. He made the revelation in the columns of a weekly newspaper, *The Spiritualist*, instead of the scientific press, and he did so, it seems, to restore public confidence in Florrie's mediumship following an unsuccessful attempt to expose her.

Rising spirits

Aware that the sceptics believed Katie was really Florrie, the scientist gave his reasons for knowing that she was not. He described a seance at which he was sitting just a few feet from the cabinet while the materialised Katie King stood before him. At the same time, he could hear Florrie moaning and sobbing, behind the curtain, as if in pain. That did not satisfy the doubters. Perhaps Florrie was using an accomplice – or was employing ventriloquism. And a major criticism of the early seances that the scientist attended with this young medium was that they mostly took place in circumstances over which he had no scientific control.

The first time he saw both medium and spirit together was at the Cooks' home in Hackney, east London. Katie asked Crookes to turn out the gas light and, using a phosphorus lamp for illumination, to follow her into a room behind the curtain. Inside, the scientist found Florrie crouching on the floor.

Kneeling down, I let air into the lamp, and by its light I saw the young lady dressed in black velvet, as she had been in the early part of the evening, and to all appearance perfectly senseless; she did not move when I took her hand and held the light quite close to her face, but continued quietly breathing. Raising the lamp, I looked around and saw Katie standing close behind Miss Cook. She was robed in flowing white drapery as we had seen her previously during the seance.

Holding one of Miss Cook's hands in mine and still kneeling, I passed the lamp up and down so as to illuminate Katie's whole figure, and satisfy myself thoroughly that I was really looking at the veritable Katie whom I had clasped in my arms a few minutes before, and not at the phantasm of a disordered brain. She did not speak, but moved her head and smiled in recognition. Three separate times did I carefully examine Miss Cook crouching before me, to be sure that the hand I held was



that of a living woman, and three separate times did I turn the lamp to Katie and examine her with steadfast scrutiny until I had no doubt whatever of her objective reality.

But since all this happened in the Cook family home sceptics would be justified in asking if the seance room were specially prepared so that someone else could enter it, after the session began, to play the part of Katie – one of Florrie's sisters, perhaps.

Crookes much preferred to control the conditions under which he investigated mediums and he wrote of his early work with Florrie Cook: 'On a few occasions, indeed, I have been allowed to apply tests and impose conditions; but only once or twice have I been permitted to carry off the priestess from her shrine, and in my own house, surrounded by my own friends, to enjoy opportunities of testing the phenomena I had witnessed under less conclusive conditions.'

Eventually Florrie's parents agreed that their teenage daughter could give more seances at the Crookes's house in Mornington Road, north-west London. In this way, the scientist and his friends could be sure that

Above: Katie King proves that she is flesh and blood; this, however, was not the question debated by sceptics. To them it seemed that she was only too obviously solid flesh – in the person of either Florrie herself (swathed in white robes) or her sister Kate, acting as accomplice

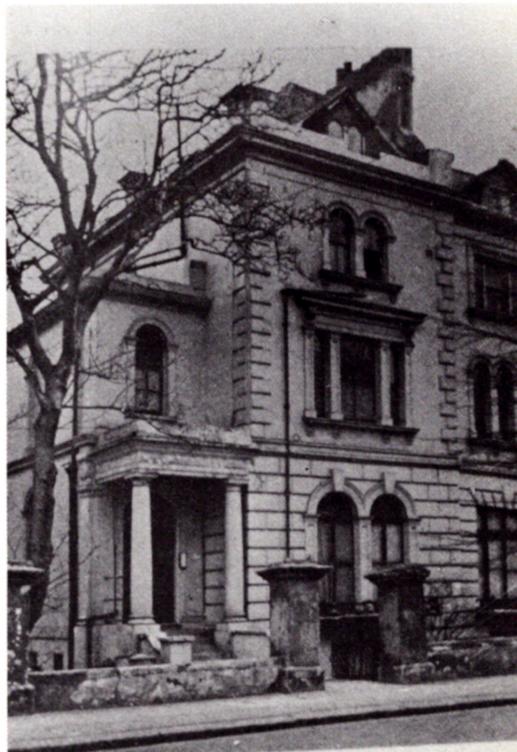
Right: 105 Elgin Crescent, Notting Hill, where Florrie's patron Charles Blackburn lived with the Cook family from 1883 to 1887

Florrie had no accomplices. But time was running out: Katie announced that the three-year period during which she had promised to work with Florrie was nearly up. Before ending her association with the medium, however, the spirit girl agreed to participate in various experiments with Crookes and allowed him to take pictures of her.

In the week before her departure, Katie appeared almost nightly in Crookes's home and a total of 44 photographs were obtained, among which were, according to Crookes himself, 'some inferior, some indifferent, and some excellent'. During these sessions the scientist reported that the medium's head was covered with a shawl to protect it from the light. Frequently the seven or eight witnesses in the laboratory saw both spirit and medium when Crookes lifted the curtain. Crookes reported that:

One of the most interesting of the pictures is one in which I am standing by the side of Katie; she has her bare foot upon a particular part of the floor. Afterwards I dressed Miss Cook like Katie, placed her and myself in exactly the same position, and we were photographed by the same cameras, placed exactly as in the other experiment, and illuminated by the same light. When these two pictures are placed over each other, the two photographs of myself coincide exactly as regards stature, etc., but Katie is half a head taller than Miss Cook, and looks a big woman in comparison with her.

The spirit's height was, he said, greater than the medium's, by between $4\frac{1}{2}$ and 6 inches (11 and 15 centimetres). And he noted other points of difference. Florrie's ears were





pierced, Katie's were not. Florrie's complexion was very dark, Katie's was very fair. The spirit girl's fingers were much longer than Florrie's and her face larger. On one occasion Crookes observed: 'Katie's neck was bare last night; the skin was perfectly smooth both to touch and sight, whilst on Miss Cook's neck is a large blister. . . .'

When Katie King made her final appearance, at a seance held in the scientist's home, she invited him into the cabinet:

After closing the curtain she conversed with me for some time, and then walked across the room where Miss Cook was lying senseless on the floor. Stooping over her, Katie touched her, and said, 'Wake up Florrie, wake up! I must leave you now.' Miss Cook then woke and tearfully entreated Katie to stay a little time longer. 'My dear, I can't; my work is done. God bless you,' Katie replied, and then continued speaking to Miss Cook.

For several minutes the two were conversing with each other, till at last Miss Cook's tears prevented her speaking. Following Katie's instructions I

Dr Gully of Malvern takes Katie's pulse, which was said to differ markedly from that of her medium, Florrie. It has been said by Florrie's critics that hastening to don Katie's robes would alter one's pulse rate significantly. But several witnesses attested that Katie and Florrie were, indeed, very different individuals: one having pierced ears, the other unpierced; one (Katie) being taller by some inches and her face being broader than Florrie's

then came forward to support Miss Cook, who was falling on to the floor, sobbing hysterically. I looked round, but the white-robed Katie had gone.

William Crookes was knighted more than 20 years later. The discoverer of thallium and inventor of various items of scientific apparatus, he became President at different times of the Royal Society, the Chemical Society, the Institution of Electrical Engineers and the British Association. In his scientific work he was used to people taking his word for the accuracy of his reports, and he must have been surprised that this did not happen with his accounts of Spiritualist phenomena.

A private view

Because of this hostile reaction Crookes abandoned his attempt to convince fellow scientists of the truth of mediumship. He also refused to allow the circulation of a photograph showing himself and Katie King arm in arm, realising, no doubt, that it would have been very damaging for his career. But he never changed his mind about his psychic experiments.

Crookes said in his presidential address to the British Association in 1898:

Thirty years have passed since I published an account of experiments tending to show that outside our scientific knowledge there exists a Force exercised by intelligence differing from the ordinary intelligence common to mortals. I have nothing to retract. I adhere to my already published statements. Indeed, I might add much thereto.

And what happened to Florrie after Katie left her? The medium began a spirit association with Marie, a girl from the other world who liked to sing and dance at seances. But her performance was rudely interrupted on a cold January night in 1880 by Sir George Sitwell, who was among the sitters. He grabbed and held her tight. When the lights were turned on the 'spirit' was found to be Florrie Cook wearing only corsets and a flannel petticoat.

But did the young London girl really fool the greatest scientist of the time? It seems so unlikely that non-believers have come up with an alternative theory: Crookes was not fooled but was party to the fraud – to cover up the scandal of his affair with Florrie Cook.

Would Crookes risk his career by doing such a thing? It seems unlikely, but stranger things have happened. Whatever the truth, the existence of Katie King does not rest entirely on Crookes's experiments, however impressive. Many others are said to have testified to having seen her manifest in a way that would seem to have ruled out any suggestion of fraud.

But in the light of new evidence . . . was Katie just a confidence trick? See page 1466

When astronomers realised that Mars is the most Earthlike of the planets, they speculated that it was the home of an advanced civilisation. IAN RIDPATH traces the progress of ideas about life on our neighbour in space

ONE SUNDAY NIGHT IN OCTOBER 1938, a strange hysteria swept across the United States. In Minneapolis a woman ran into a church, screaming: 'This is the end of the world! You might as well go home to die!' In Newark, New Jersey, families fled from their apartments with wet handkerchiefs and towels over their faces to defend themselves against gas and smoke. A man in Pittsburgh found his wife clutching a bottle of poison, screaming: 'I'd rather die this way!' Electricity officials in Providence, Rhode Island, were urged by agitated callers to black out the city. All over the nation citizens huddled in churches to pray, made tearful farewell telephone calls to relatives and jammed the switchboards of police, newspapers and radio stations.

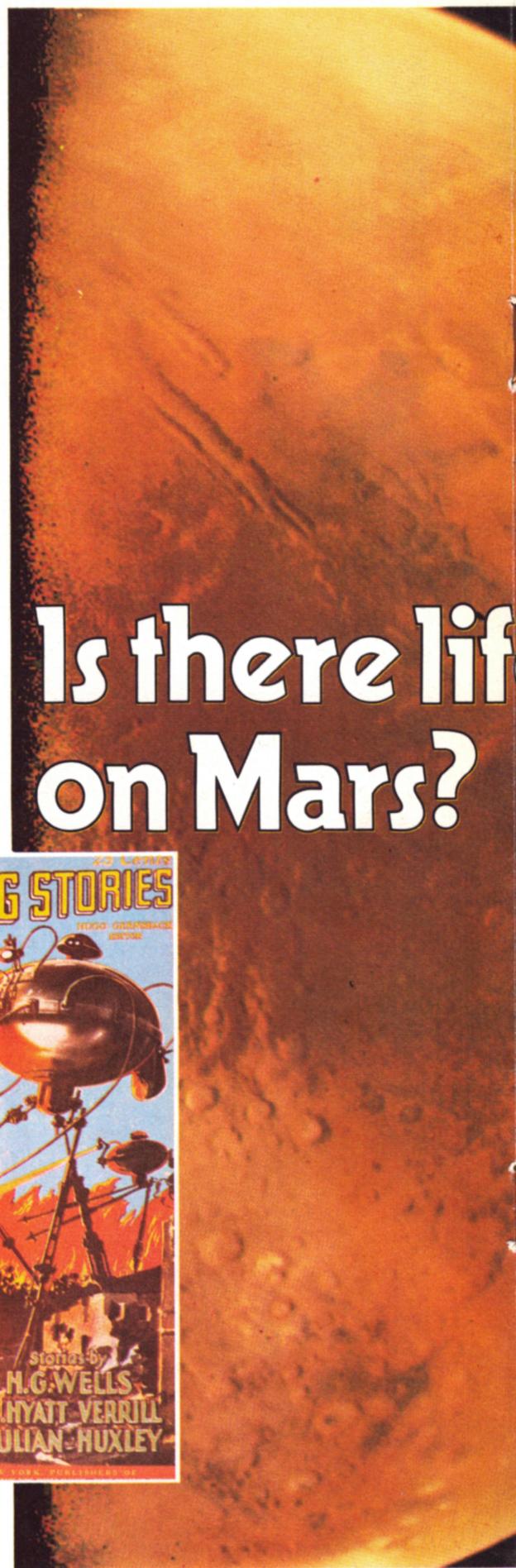
The cause of this mass hysteria was a radio broadcast graphically describing the landing of Martian spacecraft and the destruction inflicted by their weird occupants. This 'newscast' was actually part of a dramatisation of H. G. Wells's classic of science fiction, *The war of the worlds*. The astonishing impact of the play was due to the dramatic skills of Orson Welles, whose Mercury Theatre of the Air mounted the production, and to the widespread belief that Mars might indeed be inhabited.

The popular notions of Mars had been fed by four decades of science fiction stemming from the reports of some noted astronomers that Mars possessed canals. By 1938 most astronomers believed that conditions on the planet were too harsh for any advanced form of life, but thought it possible that some lowly organisms, such as moss or lichen, could live there. But these could hardly compete in the minds of the public with the beautiful Martian princesses and eight-legged beasts depicted in the novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. In these stories the hero, John Carter, roamed a world sustained by a vast system of irrigation canals, with pumping stations. When offered such romantic speculations, who wanted to know that there was no liquid water on Mars, or that the air was too thin to breathe?

Mars is popularly called the 'red planet', because of its distinctive colour, which is evident to the naked eye. A great deal about it had been established by the end of the 19th century. Moving outward from the Sun, it is the next planet beyond the Earth, at an average distance from the Sun of 142 million miles (228 million kilometres) – $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the Earth's distance. The Martian year, the time taken to complete one orbit around the Sun, is nearly twice ours – $22\frac{1}{2}$ months. The diameter of Mars is approximately half that of the Earth and gravity there is just under 40

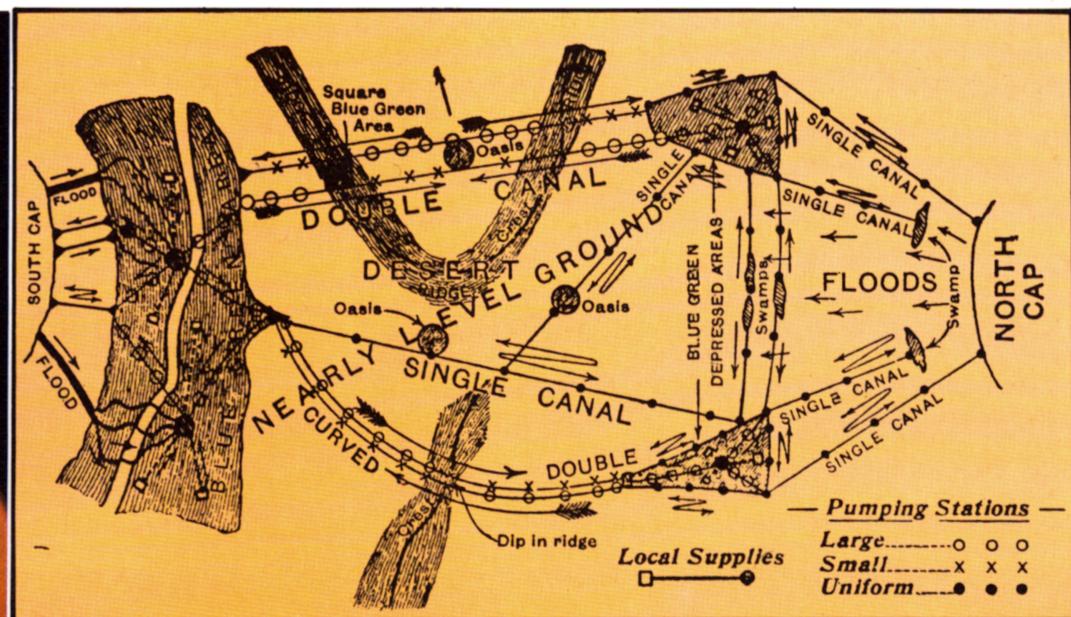
Right: the red planet, seen from one of the Viking spacecraft that were later to land and search the Martian soil for signs of life. In the north (at the top of the planet's disc) thin clouds form a bright haze. In the south frost or haze whitens a cratered area. The planet's diameter is a little more than half the Earth's – yet the enormous rift valleys just above the centre of the disc, the *Valles Marineris*, dwarf their counterparts on the Earth

Below: three-legged war machines from Mars wreak destruction on an English town with their long, flexible tentacles and searing heat-ray weapons. This illustration to H. G. Wells's *The war of the worlds* brilliantly captures the popular notion of a hostile Martian race



Is there life on Mars?





Above: part of the Martian canal system – with positions and sizes of pumping stations included. This map, published by C. E. Housden in 1914, was a feat of imagination, based on fleeting glimpses of the apparent patterns of lines on the planet's disc

Below: Percival Lowell was the originator and publiciser of the theory that the Martians were striving to preserve their civilisation by irrigating their dying planet with water from the seasonal melting of the polar caps



per cent of ours, so that an astronaut on Mars would weigh less than half what he weighed on Earth. Mars takes about 40 minutes longer than the Earth to spin on its axis, so the length of the day there would seem scarcely different from the terrestrial day.

The telescope revealed the existence of bright polar caps, which varied in size with the Martian seasons, shrinking in the hemisphere that was experiencing summer and spreading in the opposite hemisphere. But astronomers in the early 19th century, unable to see the planet's surface clearly through even the most powerful instruments, assumed it must be similar to the Earth and interpreted certain large dusky markings as seas, and ochre-coloured areas as continents.

Astronomers of that time made their biggest mistake about Mars in assuming that the planet had a dense atmosphere and temperatures similar to those on Earth. On that assumption it was reasonable to believe that Mars was inhabited, and there were various proposals for communicating with the inhabitants. One was to make giant geometrical symbols, 20 miles (30 kilometres) on a side, by planting broad belts of trees in Siberia or digging canals in the Sahara. Other ideas included lighting fires or flashing messages with vast mirrors, like an interplanetary heliograph.

Needless to say, all such schemes were wildly impractical, and only the coming of radio made interplanetary communication at all feasible. In 1924, when Mars was at its closest to Earth, some attempts were made to detect radio signals from the planet. These efforts were partly inspired by the fact that a few years earlier Marconi's company had picked up low-frequency signals that Marconi himself thought might come from Mars. (In fact, they were probably distortions of terrestrial transmissions.)

The most famous of all controversies



Life on Mars

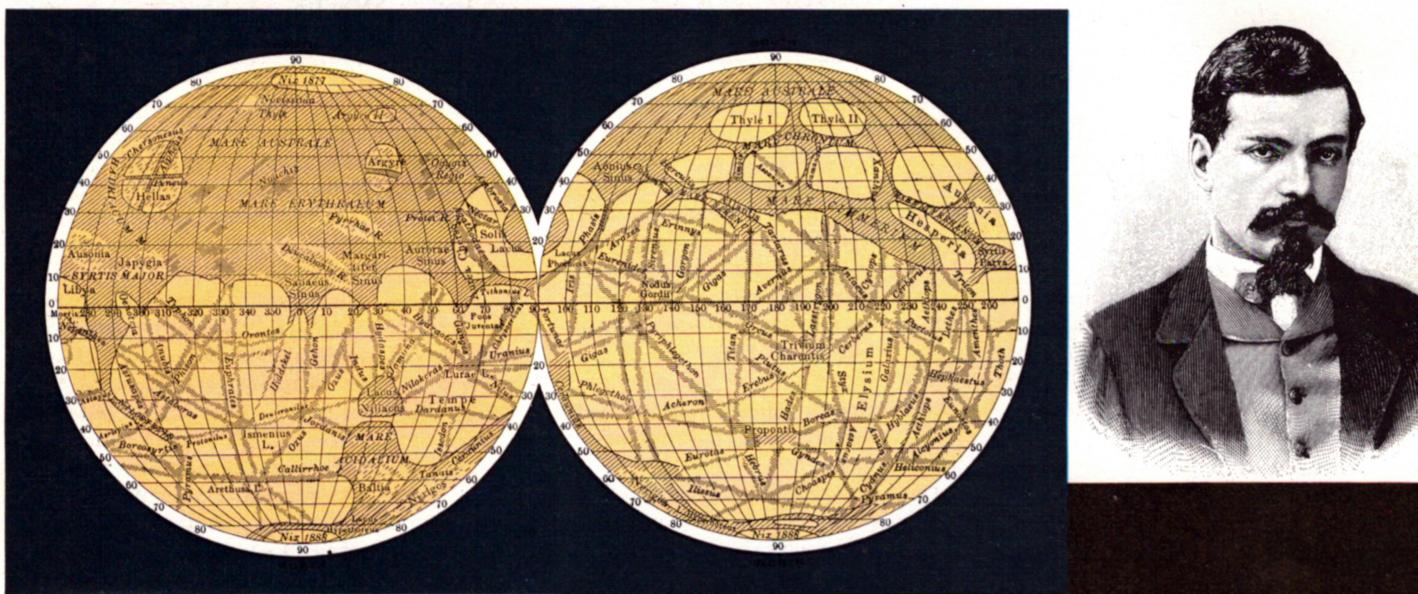
about Mars began in 1877. In that year the Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli drew a map of Mars showing what he described as 'a network of numerous lines or fine stripes' criss-crossing the planet. He compared them to 'the finest thread of a spider's web'. He termed them *canali*, an Italian word that means 'channels' but that was translated as 'canals', with the inevitable implication that they were artificial. Schiaparelli recorded 40 'canals' in 1877.

Some other observers thought they could see the canals, others failed to do so. One astronomer who saw them in great profusion was an American, Percival Lowell. And whereas Schiaparelli kept an open mind on whether the canals were artificial, Lowell was in no doubt on the matter. He asserted boldly that they were the work of a civilisation

Detailed charts of Mars (below) were produced by Giovanni Schiaparelli (below right), based on his observations from 1877 to 1888. The 'canals' seemed permanent enough to be systematically named. (The word *mare* in some of the names means 'sea'.) The usual vagueness of the surface features as seen even in powerful telescopes is well conveyed by the astronomical drawing (bottom). Only for brief moments did the Earth's atmosphere become so clear that 'canals' could be seen

water flowed to the crops, which darkened in colour and spread over the desert. They charted an amazing pattern of canals, some radiating like spokes from dark spots, or 'oases', while others were apparently split into two along part of their length. In answer to the criticism that canals would be too narrow to be seen from Earth, Lowell theorised that each canal was bordered by wide strips of cultivated land, and it was these that astronomers could see.

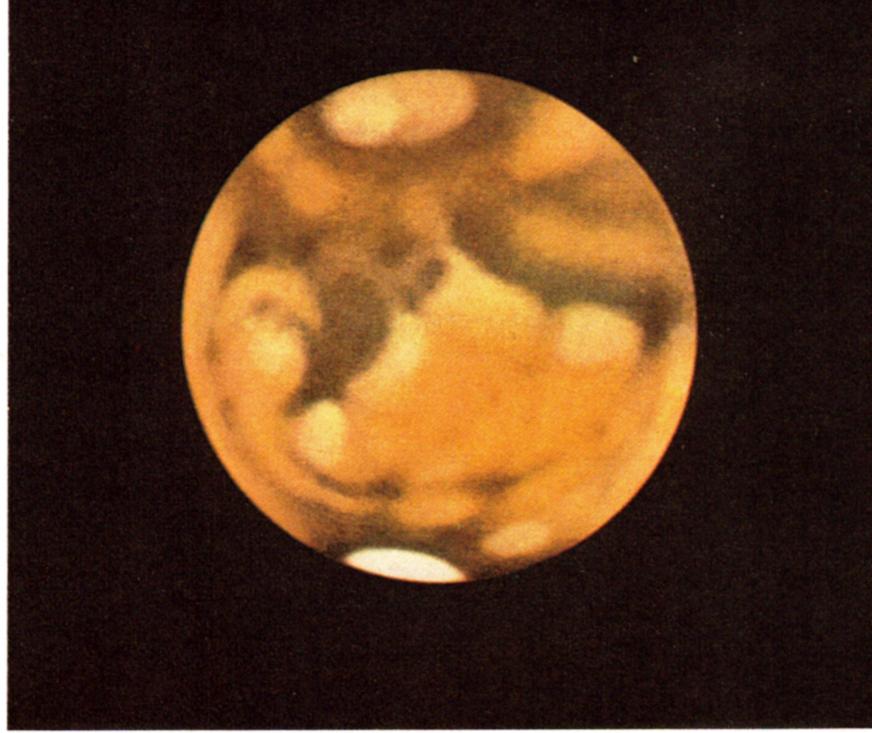
The Mars of science fiction, including Wells's *The war of the worlds*, is the Mars of Percival Lowell. Alas, it bears no relation to the real Mars. Even in Lowell's time there was fierce opposition to his speculations. In 1907 Alfred Russel Wallace, friend and colleague of Charles Darwin, appreciated that Mars would be too cold and dry for life to



engaged in a life-or-death struggle against drought on a dying world. The canal network brought water from the polar ice caps to the crops in regions closer to the equator.

Schiaparelli had been one of the first to argue forcibly that the dark areas were not oceans; he pointed out that the Sun would be reflected in expanses of water, whereas such reflections were never seen by observers studying Mars. Furthermore, some of the canals were seen to cross the dark areas. Opinion therefore swung to the view that the dark areas on Mars were actually vegetation—possibly moss or lichen, or, in Lowell's fantastic vision, enormous plantations of crops.

The dark areas seemed likely to be vegetation because of their apparent greenish colour and changeable outlines. Actually the apparent colour of the dark areas was an illusion, caused by contrast with the red of the surrounding areas. It was still thought that the dark areas were lowland basins, probably ancient sea beds. Lowell and his followers even claimed to see seasonal waves of growth as the polar caps melted and fresh



exist there. He asserted that the planet was both uninhabited and uninhabitable.

As observers looked at Mars more carefully with bigger and better telescopes they reported that, under the best seeing conditions, the fine, straight canals broke up into disconnected dots and splotches. Gradually it became clear that the canals were an optical illusion, a product of the human eye and brain, not of Martian civilisation.

Further disquieting news came from observations of the planet's atmosphere, made from the 1930s onwards. They indicated that the Martian air was as thin as the Earth's at an altitude twice that of Everest. (In fact the actual atmospheric density on Mars, as measured by space probes, is even less than this.) A planet with such an insubstantial atmosphere to retain heat must be very cold. Creatures as large and complex as human beings could not breathe such thin air – even if it contained oxygen, which it does not. By the time of Orson Welles's *War of the worlds* broadcast in 1938 there should have been no serious thought of advanced life on Mars. Astronomers still considered it probable, however, that some hardy form of plant life could cling to existence there.

Mars in close-up

Scientific knowledge of Mars was unavoidably limited until the first space probe to reach the planet flew by it in 1965. The Mariner 4 space vehicle approached to within 6000 miles (10,000 kilometres) of the planet, sending back a series of sensational television pictures. These showed, to astronomers' surprise, that the surface of Mars looks like that of the Moon. It is pocked with craters up to 75 miles (120 kilometres) in diameter apparently caused by the impact of giant meteorites in the distant past. Of canals – or of life – there was no sign.

More depressing still were the results of the probe's measurements on the atmosphere of Mars, which showed it to be made primarily of carbon dioxide, at a pressure less than 1 per cent of the Earth's atmospheric pressure. Having so little atmospheric cover, Mars must be frigid, with sub-zero temperatures everywhere and with no protection from intense ultra-violet radiation from the Sun. The impression of Mars as a lifeless Moonlike body was reinforced when Mariner 6 and 7 made their fly-by missions in 1969.

Interest in life on Mars dwindled after these space missions. Ideas of the advanced Martian civilisation dreamed of by Percival Lowell were gone forever. Yet it was not long before interest was to be rekindled – though only in the possibility of a very lowly form of life. The cause was the first complete photographic map of Mars, made by Mariner 9, which in 1971 went into orbit around the planet. At first it could see nothing, for a planet-wide dust storm was in progress at the time. But as the dust settled a number of



The largest volcano on Mars is appropriately named Olympus Mons, after the legendary home of the gods. The dome is 350 miles (560 kilometres) across and it rises 15 miles (24 kilometres) above the surrounding country. Martian volcanoes were once highly active and could have released enough water vapour into the atmosphere to permit the evolution of life. Simple organisms might have survived until the present, even though conditions on modern Mars are extremely harsh

mountain peaks appeared – the tops of massive volcanoes. The largest, called Olympus Mons, is 15 miles (24 kilometres) high and 350 miles (560 kilometres) in diameter, making it larger than any volcano on Earth, even those of Hawaii. There were also winding valleys that looked like the beds of dried-up rivers. By ill-luck the earlier Mariner had photographed the parts of Mars that, geologically, were the least interesting.

The Mariner 9 pictures laid to rest the speculation about the dark areas on Mars. They consist of dark rock, and their seasonal changes in appearance are due to the movements of wind-blown dust.

The existence of volcanoes was good news for biologists. Volcanic eruptions would have poured forth vast amounts of gas, much of it water vapour, which could have condensed and fallen as rain to produce the features that are apparently dried-up lake and river beds. With a denser atmosphere, the planet would also have been warmer. Therefore, astronomers speculated, conditions on Mars may once have been favourable for the origin of life – and that life might cling to existence, on or under the red sands of Mars.

On page 1490: the next step – landing on Mars to search for living organisms

One-way ticket from nowhere

For centuries there have been reports of people suddenly appearing who have no known identity, or whose background is a complete mystery. PAUL BEGG looks at some of the more bizarre of these cases



IT IS PERHAPS a telling symptom of modern society that some people can disappear and not be missed. There are dozens of accounts of people who have been found, usually dead – sometimes in strange circumstances – without any identification on their persons and without any kin or friends searching for them. While not all these people's deaths can be considered truly mysterious – at least not in the paranormal sense – sometimes the manner of their passing is so unusual that we are forced to look at the matter afresh.

For example: in November 1888 two residents of Birmingham, Alabama, USA, were murdered and their bodies were found in some woods. Near by there was a third corpse. 'The body lies unidentified in the undertaker's rooms,' reported the *St Louis Globe Democrat*, continuing:

No one who has seen it can remember having seen the man in life, and identification seems impossible. The dead man was evidently in good circumstances, if not wealthy, and what he could have been doing at the spot where his body was found is a mystery. Several persons who have seen the body are of the opinion that the man was a foreigner. Anyway he was an entire stranger in this vicinity, and his coming must have been as mysterious as his death.

In 1920 a naked man was found in a ploughed

Corpses that yield few clues to their identity have been found even in bureaucratic modern times, when everyone seems to be well-documented. An unknown man plummeted to his death from Kestrel House, Islington, London (left), in 1975. And corpses with no past have been discovered – amid some publicity – in Petersfield, Hampshire (right), and in Yellowham Woods (far right) and on Chesil Beach (top right) in Dorset, in the 1970s



Unclothed Man's Death From Exposure.

From Our Special Correspondent.

PETERSFIELD, Thursday.

Who is the blue-eyed man whose nude body was found in a ploughed field at East Meon, near here, six weeks ago?

That a man could wander near to the main road between Petersfield and Winchester in a nude condition until he died in a field from exposure, aggravated by minor injuries such as cuts and abrasions, is astonishing, but that his identity and everything connected with his death should remain a mystery to-day is almost unbelievable. It is a baffling mystery.

The man's nails were manicured, the palms of his hands showed that he was not engaged in manual labour, and his features and general appearance were those of someone of a superior class. But although his photograph has been circulated north, east, south and west through the United Kingdom, the police are still without a clue, and there is no record of any missing person bearing the slightest resemblance to this man, presumably of education and good standing.

THEORIES AND SPECULATION.

There are plenty of theories. The popular one, according to my information, is that the man was brought here from a more or less文明 place and turned out to stumble along the highway presumably at about midnight, and perhaps intoxicated.

The railway runs near the ploughed field. Is it possible that he was thrown or fell from a train, his clothing having first been removed? There was a tear in the palm of one hand, cuts on the soles of the feet, bruises on the wrist and legs, and scratches on the arms. Dr. Staford, who examined the body, believes that these injuries may have been caused by struggling through the hedges, falling over obstacles, etc.

The Coroner suggested at the inquest that the man may have been suffering from neurasthenia or shell shock—but his relatives would surely in that event have reported his disappearance or his clothes would have been found. As someone down here said to me: "When a tramp dies by the roadside his is generally in rags." This is certainly did not appear to be of the tramp class, and it seems incredible that he could have vanished from the world without being missed.

MYSTERIOUS MOTOR-CAR.

A police official who has been engaged on the case told me to-day that there was a trail through the coppice, where the man had torn his way through. He had pushed his way through brambles that seem almost as formidable as a barbed-wire entanglement. No one but a madman would do such a thing.

It is possible, of course, that he was a soldier from one of the camps round here, and that he is posted as an absentee, but this inquiry has so far failed to support this suggestion.

I was told to-night of a shepherd who was watching his flock in a field near to where the man was found, and he says that in the small hours of the morning he heard a motor-car stop and restart close by. The night was bitterly cold.

A cottager who lives not very far away also heard a car stop at about the same time.



field near Petersfield, Hampshire. Prints of the man's bare feet were traced to the road, and across the road into another field. A search of this field failed to find the man's clothing. As far as the evidence indicated, the man had appeared from nowhere, wandered aimlessly, perhaps in desperation—his body bore scratches such as would be made by bushes and hedges—until he died from exposure. That the poor fellow was unfamiliar with the area is suggested by the fact that he was only a mile (1.6 kilometres) from the nearest house. A photograph of the man was widely circulated, but nobody recognised him. 'There is no record of any missing person bearing the slightest resemblance to this man, presumably of good education and standing,' reported the London *Daily News*.

And such unidentified corpses continue to be found. On 1 December 1975, an inquest was held in Dorchester, England, into the deaths of three men. The first had been washed up on Chesil Beach, Dorset, in March 1974; the second was found on the

shore near Weymouth five months later; and the third was found in Yellowham Woods, near Dorchester, in March 1975. None of the men was identified.

In 1975 a young man plummeted from the 17-storey Kestrel House in City Road, Islington, London. The man, who was not wearing a jacket or overcoat, despite it being midwinter, carried no clue to his identity beyond two bus tickets issued by Southampton Corporation and an envelope addressed to the National Savings headquarters in Glasgow. But both these potential clues led nowhere.

Inspector Robert Gibson of King's Cross police said that he could not accept that this outwardly respectable young man could have gone missing without somebody trying to find out where he was. However, when the

story of the 'Death Plunge Man' was reported in the *Sunday Express*, his body had been unidentified for a year. Said Inspector Gibson: 'Somebody somewhere must have loved him or at least known him.' Perhaps they did, but perhaps the 'somewhere' where they were was not the same 'somewhere' where we are.

These are just a few of the hundreds of examples of the unidentified and mysterious dead. Most of them can probably be explained by the fact that we live in a relatively rootless society where people easily move from place to place and can die hundreds or thousands of miles from home and friends. But this convenient idea certainly does not explain all peculiar appearances of dead men.

There are also numerous cases of so-called 'wild people'—not to be confused with people raised by animals, such as Romulus and Remus—who seem to have entered our world as if from another dimension. They are frequently unable to account for themselves and they can at best be described as total



amnesiacs. Some may subsequently be identified, but since the media soon lose interest and rarely pursue such cases it is often difficult to discover the outcome and ultimate fate of the appearer. A few, however, have become celebrities – Count St Germain, for example (see page 138), and Kaspar Hauser, who is perhaps the most famous ‘appearing person’ (see page 961). Kaspar was found wandering in Nuremberg in 1828, unable to say anything about himself or about how he had got there. But Kaspar was not a simple amnesiac. He said that for as long as he could remember he had been confined in a small, dimly lit room and had never seen the face of his captor. Who had held Kaspar Hauser captive, and why, has remained a mystery.

Royalty calls

Remarkable though it is, the story of Kaspar is by no means unique. Equally complex is the story of Princess Caraboo. On the evening of 3 April 1817, a girl knocked on the door of a cottage near Bristol and in an unknown language asked for food (although how the residents of the cottage knew that she was asking for food if she spoke an unknown language is as yet an unanswered question). The girl ended up standing before a magistrate, Samuel Worrell, who took her to his home. The girl’s language and her equally unrecognisable writing attracted linguists from around the country, but none could understand what she was saying until one, Manuel Eyenesso, said that she was speaking in the Malay language. She was, he said, Princess Caraboo and she had been



Above left: Kaspar Hauser, perhaps the most famous of all ‘appearing persons’. His strange tale of imprisonment, and the bizarre manner of his death – he was apparently murdered by an assailant who was himself a mystery – added to the enduring interest of his story

Above: a woodwose, one of the wild men believed to inhabit woodland Britain. There have been many reports of such people being caught by villagers, but the wild men spoke no intelligible language – which only added to the conundrum

Right: ‘The Wonder of the West’, or ‘Princess Caraboo’, who appeared at the door of an English cottage in 1817. She spoke a strange language, which was eventually identified as Malayan. However, an ordinary Englishwoman claimed her as her daughter. The truth about ‘Princess Caraboo’ remains obscure

kidnapped by pirates from her home in Java. After many adventures she had managed to escape from them and eventually reached England.

However, a Mrs Willcocks then arrived from the village of Witheridge in Devon and said that Princess Caraboo was her daughter Mary. Mary confessed to the deception and was entrusted to the care of Mrs Willcocks, who sent her to America, where she disappeared from the public gaze. So what of Manuel Eyenesso’s fabulous story? He, it seems, was an impostor who ‘translated’ Mary’s gibberish into a story of his own invention. Thus we have two impostors for the price of one. Or do we?

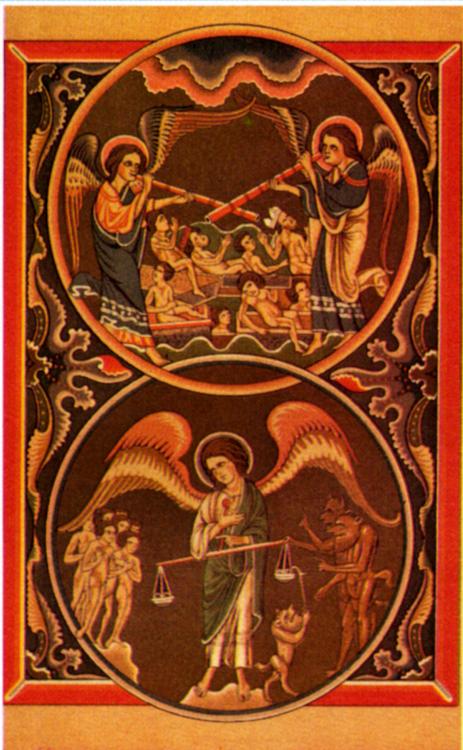
Sources differ to a considerable extent. According to one, Mrs Worrell (the wife of the magistrate) had gone to Witheridge and there located Mrs Willcocks and established Mary’s identity. Moreover, it was Mrs Worrell who paid for the girl to go to America and, once there, Mary (or Princess Caraboo) did not disappear but gave exhibitions, in Philadelphia and elsewhere, of her unknown writing.

We are left, then, with two irreconcilable stories and at least two impostors. If Princess Caraboo was really Mary Willcocks, then Manuel Eyenesso must have been an impostor because he declared that she was speaking Malay, which was highly unlikely. Again, it was Eyenesso who said she was Princess Caraboo. And we have Mrs Willcocks who, if Princess Caraboo and Eyenesso were genuine, was not the mother of Mary and was therefore an impostor. And there is Mrs Worrell who, though not an impostor, may have concocted the whole Mary story simply to get the girl away from Mrs Worrell’s



The Wonder of the West.

“And where did she come from? and who can she be?
Did she fall from the sky? did she rise from the sea?”



With a pinch of salt

The Bible offers many stories of mysterious 'appearing people', who are more generally known as angels. They are not always winged or bathed in a heavenly golden glow, nor do they always appear in dreams. On the contrary, they often seem solidly human in every respect. For example, take the angels who came to Abraham as he was sitting 'in the tent door in the heat of the day' and told him that his aged wife Sarah would bear a child (Genesis 18). The three angels looked like men and they behaved like men – even dining with Abraham.

Similarly the two angels who came to Lot and told him to gather his family and flee from Sodom (Genesis 19) were clearly of human form, and are repeatedly referred to as 'men'. Again, we are told that they ate, rested and took shelter with Lot, yet they were possessed of advance knowledge of the cataclysm that was about to befall the Cities of the Plain. But Lot's wife did not heed their advice not to look back on the destruction – and she was turned into a pillar of salt, which was left standing in the desert.

husband. The permutations of the Caraboo story leave the brain in a whirl.

Five 'wild men' and a 'wild girl' were found in Connecticut, USA, in January 1888. Between 1904 and 1905 ten 'wild men' were found in various parts of England. One of them is reported to have spoken a language that nobody had heard before and to have carried a book in which there was unknown and unidentified writing. Between 1920 and

Below: the High Street, Chatham, Kent, where a bewildered naked man was found wandering on 6 January 1914. He could give no account of himself and was finally declared insane and locked up in the Medway Infirmary for the rest of his life



1923 six people were found wandering in or near Romford, Essex. None could say how they had got there or tell anything about themselves.

In 1923 a naked man was seen several times at Lord Carnarvon's country estate near Newbury, Hampshire. By a striking coincidence he was first seen on 17 March, the day on which Lord Carnarvon fell ill, and was last seen on 5 April, the day Carnarvon died.

There is also the story of the naked man who, in the afternoon of Tuesday 6 January 1914, suddenly appeared in the High Street, Chatham, Kent (see page 1421). The man's identity was not established and he was later declared insane and taken to Medway Infirmary.

Charles Fort, the great American collector of reports of strange happenings, commented on the Chatham naked man in his book *Lo!*:

I suspect that many persons have been put away, as insane, simply because they were gifted with uncommon insights, or had been through uncommon experiences. . . . If there have ever been instances of teleportations of human beings from somewhere else to this Earth, an examination of inmates of infirmaries and workhouses and asylums might lead to some marvelous astronomical disclosures. . . . Early in the year 1928 a man did appear in a town in New Jersey, and did tell that he had come from the planet Mars. Wherever he came from, everybody knows where he went, after telling that.

In the 17th century, Kenneth Odhar – the prophet of the Seaforth family – was hailed as one of the greatest Highland seers ever. And, as FRANK SMYTH explains, it seems that his predictions continue to be fulfilled today

IF WE ARE to give folklore and historical legend any credence at all, the power of 'second sight' has been commonplace in the Highlands of Scotland – and in Ireland whence the Celtic people of the north came – for centuries. Until the 18th century, every glen and braeside from Lochaber to the far tip of Caithness had, it would seem, its resident 'wise' man or woman, traditionally the seventh child of a seventh child, who through the power of God or fairies inherited the gift of *taibh-searachd* – prophecy.

After the last Jacobite uprising ended with the disastrous battle of Culloden in 1746, the clans were considerably reduced in number and their remnants exiled and scattered to the West Indies, North America, and later Australia and New Zealand. But the tradition of the 'Highland seer' lived on; even today his descendants are looked upon tolerantly and with respect.

In the 19th century there was a quickening of interest in the 'romantic' Highlands. George IV encouraged the trend by appearing at Edinburgh with his portly frame wrapped in the newly invented 'Royal Stewart' tartan, a fashion followed by the Prince Consort, who went as far as to design a tartan wallpaper and carpet for Balmoral, and Sir Walter Scott had already fanned the flame with his popular historical novels.

In the wake of this 'romanticism' came the folklorists, indefatigably tramping over the heather in search of quaint tales and superstitions. One of the more respected of these

Baile-na-Cille in Uig on the Isle of Lewis, reputedly the place where Kenneth Odhar, the Brahan seer, received his precognitive powers. According to legend, he either found or was given a magic stone, and it was in this that he was able to see the future. It seems that Kenneth paid dearly for his gift, for one tale has him half-blinded, and several accounts describe him as 'cam' – one-eyed or squinting

was Andrew Lang, himself a Scot, an active member of the Society for Psychical Research, and the author of, among other books, *The making of religion* (1898), which dealt with examples of second sight among primitive societies. Turning to his homeland, Lang examined the evidence for and against the powers of the native seers. In a paper published in 1899, he was able to 'unblushingly confess the belief that there probably are occasional instances of second sight, that is of "premonitions"'.

However, Lang urged that all the evidence in each individual case be considered, pointing out that the strongest cases must rest on prophecies that had been recorded before their 'fulfilment', thus ruling out the possibility of romantic hindsight. Obviously, the more explicit the prediction, the more convincing its detailed fulfilment would be.

Under these terms, the posthumous claims made for Coinneach Odhar of MacKenzie, the Brahan seer, stand up to considerable scrutiny. Famous in his lifetime as the resident prophet of the mighty Seaforth family, he came to be regarded as one of the most impressive Highland seers ever when, 150 years after his death, his predictions regarding the unusual circumstances of the family's extinction came precisely true.

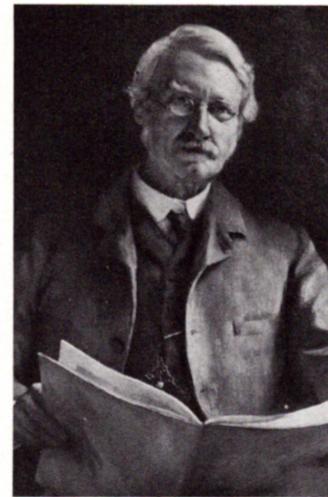
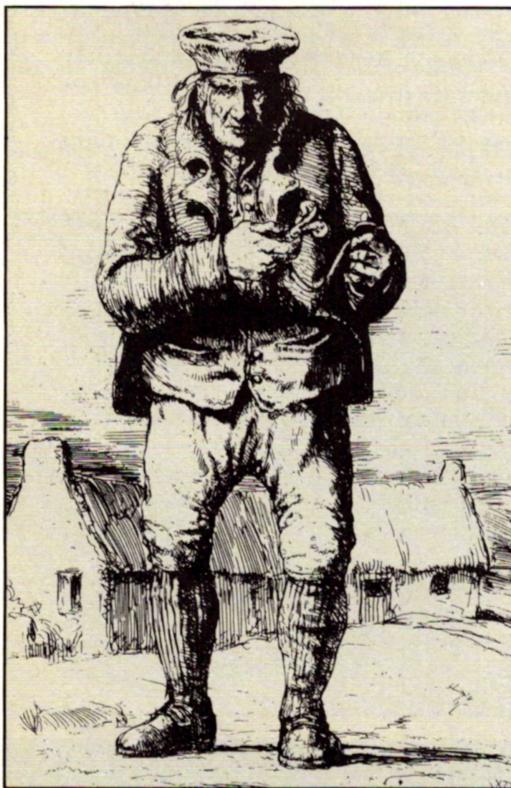
Coinneach – Gaelic Kenneth – was born in the parish of Uig on the Isle of Lewis around the year 1600. According to Alexander Cameron of Lochmaddy, who chronicled many of the seer's prophecies some years after his death, it was at some time during his early teens that Kenneth's powers developed. Several versions of their origins exist, all involved with the supernatural. According to one, his mother, tending her cattle in the graveyard of Baile-na-Cille near Uig, met

Prophet by appointment



the ghost of a daughter of the King of Norway, who gave her a blue stone in which Kenneth would see the future. Other accounts tell how Kenneth himself was given a white stone with a hole in it by the fairies, and it was through this that he was able to see coming events.

Whatever the source of his powers, news of them spread to Kenneth's feudal overlord, Kenneth Cabarfeidh – Staghead – Mackenzie, who in 1609 had been created first Lord Mackenzie of Kintail. The chief's stronghold was Brahan Castle, a few miles from Dingwall on the Cromarty Firth, and at his summons Kenneth Odhar went to live on the Brahan lands. Soon after Odhar's arrival the old chief died and was succeeded by his son, who was created first Earl of Seaforth in



Above: the writer and psychical researcher Andrew Lang (1844–1912), who examined the evidence for second sight in his native Scotland. He confessed to a belief in the existence of 'premonitions', saying: 'I know too many examples among persons of my acquaintance . . . to have any doubt about the matter'

Left: a *taibhsear* – seer – of the Highlands. Such figures commanded respect in the community as it was widely believed that the power of second sight was a gift from God, or inherited from the fairies

Below: the battle of Culloden, 1746, which – in one of his more memorable prophecies – the Brahan seer accurately predicted over 100 years before

1623; it was the first Earl's grandson who was to build Odhar's fame.

Kenneth, third Earl of Seaforth, was roughly the same age as Kenneth the poor prophet and seems to have been fascinated by him. He released the seer from his job as farm labourer on the Brahan estate and, although still lodged in a sod-roofed cottage, Odhar the Lewisman – who spoke only Gaelic – was introduced into local learned society.

He cannot have been a cheerful companion, for his predictions invariably involved bloodshed or disaster, pronounced with a dour relish. On one occasion, for instance, an elderly man, Duncan Macrae of Glenshiel, asked the seer to tell him 'by what means he would end his days'. Odhar immediately replied that he would die by the sword. Such an event seemed so unlikely that Odhar stood in danger of being discredited:

for one thing, Macrae had been distinguished in the Mackenzie army in clan wars without coming to harm, and for another there had been no tribal feuding for years. Nevertheless, recorded his kinsman and contemporary the Reverend John Macrae of Dingwall, Duncan Macrae died as predicted, the victim of a misunderstanding. In 1654 General Monck led a troop of Parliamentary soldiers up to Kintail and a company of them met Macrae walking in the hills behind his house. Addressed in a language he did not understand and startled by the strange uniforms, Macrae put his hand to his broadsword and was immediately cut down: 'This was all the blood that General Monck or his soldiers, amounting to 1500 men, had drawn.'

The weeping widow

Most of the time the seer's advice was unsolicited, and his predictions were interesting only because they proved accurate. One day he announced that 'A Lochalsh woman shall weep over the grave of a Frenchman in the burying place of Lochalsh.' Frenchmen were virtually unknown north of Edinburgh, and yet within a few months the Earl of Seaforth discovered that a Lochalsh woman had married a French footman who died young; the widow had taken to weeping by his graveside every day.

Doubtless these insights into the immediate future enthralled Odhar's contemporaries, but it was his long range predictions that fascinated the likes of Andrew Lang. Odhar gained nothing from them personally, not even prestige, for their fulfilment lay far in the future, and this as much as their accuracy gives them the hallmark of genuine precognition.

One pronouncement that was marvelled at when it proved true was that in the village of Baile Mhulinn, in the west of Sutherland, there would live a woman named Baraball n'ic Coinnich (Annabella Mackenzie) who would die of measles. In about 1860 there was a woman of that name living in the





village, but she was 95 years old and it seemed unlikely that her death would be caused by that disease; then, a few years later, Annabella died – as predicted – of measles.

In 1630 Seaforth 'lent' Odhar to a 'gentleman from Inverness', who wrote down a string of the seer's utterances. One well-authenticated pronouncement was made on the way to the gentleman's house. Crossing a bleak patch of moorland, Odhar said: 'Oh! Drumossie, thy bleak moor shall, ere many generations have passed away, be stained with the best blood of the Highlands. Glad I am that I will not see that day . . . heads will be lopped off by the score, and no mercy will be shown.' One hundred and sixteen years later the battle of Culloden was fought on that very spot.

Mystery of the moving stone

Another startling prediction concerned an 8-tonne stone that marked the boundaries of the estates of Culloden and Moray. The day would come, said Odhar, when the 'Stone of Petty' would be moved mysteriously from its position on dry land and re-erected in the sea of Petty Bay. It is a matter of record that during the stormy night of 20 February 1799 the huge stone was uprooted and ended in the sea some 250 yards (230 metres) from the shore line. No satisfactory explanation of its moving has ever been put forward.

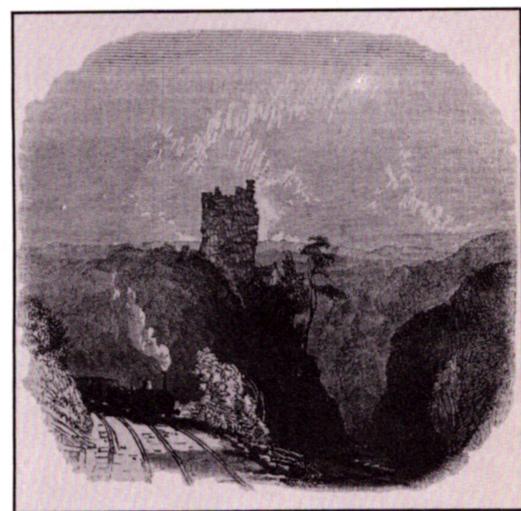
In another of his predictions Odhar spoke of 'strings of black carriages, horseless and bridleless', which would pass through the Highlands, led by 'a fiery chariot' – a fair description of the railways of mid Victorian times. He also stated that ships with sails would pass behind the 'fairy hill' of Tomnahurich near Inverness; they began to do so when the Caledonian Canal was opened in the 1820s. Tomnahurich itself was common

Some of the seer's accurate predictions: of the common land at Tomnahurich that became a cemetery (above) in the 19th century, he said it would be 'under lock and key and the Fairies secured within'; of the advent of the railways (right) he said 'horseless' carriages would be led by a 'chariot of fire'; and the downfall of the Fairburn Mackenzies, he rightly said, would be signalled by the birth of a calf and the sprouting of a rowan tree in the ruin of Fairburn Tower (below)

land but, said Kenneth, one day it would 'be under lock and key, and the Fairies secured within'. In the mid 19th century it became a cemetery, and today is surrounded by a fence with a locked gate.

For the Mackenzies of Fairburn, cousins of Seaforth, Odhar could see nothing but doom. Over the years he predicted gruesome fates for them, combined with financial ruin and final obliteration; eventually, Odhar said, a rowan tree would grow from a crack in Fairburn Tower, and a cow would calve in its upmost chamber. In Odhar's time the tower was new and strong, but in the 18th century, when its owners lost their lands following the Jacobite rebellion, it fell into ruin. In 1851 a cow did make its way up the narrow and precipitous stairway and calved in the top room, while a rowan tree sprang from a fissure half way up the tower wall and grew to a considerable size before dying in the summer drought of 1957.

On page 1475: the pearl of the seer's prophecies – the doom of the Seaforths



Post script

Your letters to
THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,

When I was about eight or nine I was in bed with flu – nothing serious but I suppose I was feeling weak and had a temperature. I could see the open bedroom door and the landing outside reflected in my dressing table mirror. Then suddenly I saw a man standing there, apparently deep in thought.

He was wearing a flat cap and a muffler and a baggy, ill-fitting suit. He seemed worried, nervously pulling at his rather bushy moustache. Strange, I suppose, noticing all this detail. I wasn't frightened in the least and anyway the man didn't so much as look in my direction, but shambled off along the landing and out of sight.

Later, when my mother came upstairs to see me I asked her who the 'old man' was. She said 'It must have been Daddy.' Nonsense of course, and she didn't fool me! I kept quiet about my ghost – for I soon realised that's what he must have been. I never saw him again.

It was years later that my mother discovered the one and only photograph of her father, who had died in the 1930s. It was my ghost, down to every detail.

There was one particular bedroom in our house that seemed 'haunted'. Every so often the sleeper would be woken up by a very loud and distinctive rap. Another rap would follow – as if to reassure the sleeper that she (for it was always a woman who heard it) hadn't dreamed it! It seemed that the raps began after my grandfather's death. My grandmother and my mother heard them. And so did I, many times.

My family finally moved out of that house in the 1970s. The next tenants, a young couple with a baby, apparently heard footsteps and raps and suffered from a whole barrage of poltergeist effects until they brought in an exorcist. This happened about six months after they moved in.

Could it be that our family had somehow suppressed the 'haunting'? Or – loath as I am personally to accept a Spiritualist interpretation – was it simply that my grandfather's ghost was unhappiest, and most obtrusive, when strangers lived in his house?

Yours faithfully,
Sarah Dickens

Leeds, Yorkshire

Dear Sir,

I would like to tell you about one of my dreams, which I had repeatedly for about nine months while I was carrying my first child. My elder sister was also pregnant.

I dreamed of two baby boys: one was weak and would not eat, the other was strong. The weak one grew very frail while the strong child grew very fat. Then the weak baby got better, while the one that had been stronger died.

My sister and I had our babies within two weeks of each other. We both had boys; mine wasn't expected to live, but my sister's was a fine healthy child. Within two months my baby got well, yet my sister's died.

I had another dream about 18 months ago. I dreamed I was on the sands at Redcar, in Cleveland. (In real life my husband was working in Redcar at the time.) I was kneeling in front of a tombstone. I was really heartbroken. On the tombstone an inscription read: 'In loving memory of . . . (Redcar)' – there was

no name. I thought I should warn my husband.

A few months later my father died very suddenly. As Redcar was the place to which he used to take my mother every Sunday for a car ride, because they loved it so much there, my mother decided she would scatter his ashes on the beach. But the family talked her out of it because, they said, it would be too distressing for her.

Could these dreams have been coincidences? Or were they premonitions?

Yours faithfully,
J. Stelling (Mrs)

Ripon, Yorkshire

Mrs Stelling's dreams certainly seem to be premonitions – it would be rather far-fetched to dismiss them as coincidences. We would especially welcome reports of our readers' premonitions sent to us before the occurrence of the predicted event.

Dear Sir,

Is there a cover-up? Since *The Unexplained* was first published not one word has appeared in it to support the theory that human beings were genetically engineered by aliens. Perhaps the greatest mystery of all, we have until now had to accept the mumblings of evolutionists to explain where we came from! But no longer! A better and more logical theory will topple the others.

The only answer is that we are genetically engineered by alien astronauts from outer space – engineered from monkeys (our so-called ancestors, as the evolutionists claim). The evolutionists, to prove their case, need to falsify evidence, viz. Piltdown Man, which was, as we all know, a hoax! Evolutionists not only don't know when they've been had, they don't know where (or when!) to place fossils of our so-called 'ancestors'. They are always placing our so-called beginnings farther and farther back in time. And it is obvious to me that these pathetic creatures could not have been our 'ancestors' because none of them even remotely resembled us!

Janet and Colin Bord propounded the nonsense of the evolutionists in their rubbish about the bigfoot, which, they say, is an ape! [Issue 3.] Don't they know that these so-called 'relatives' are seen mostly in close proximity to spaceships?

Your otherwise excellent magazine is missing a golden opportunity to inform the public of the truth of our *artificial* genesis! Possibly the greatest mystery, and *truth*, of all time!

Yours disgustedly,
J. Michell

Liverpool, Merseyside

We hope our series 'Ancient astronauts', which began in issue 62, has convinced Mr Michell that we are not 'covering up' the topic – though its combination of evidence and argument may not be to his taste. We hope, too, that he was pleased to see Rupert Sheldrake's series of articles, beginning in issue 59: a critical view of orthodox evolutionary theory – by an 'evolutionist'. Finally, if he will turn back to issue 3, he will find that Janet and Colin Bord did not plump for the theory that bigfeet are apes, and are well aware that they are sometimes associated with UFOs – though perhaps not spaceships.

THE WORLD'S MYSTERIOUS PLACES - 28
Mount Shasta, California

